



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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### Determination of Effect on Historic Properties

Author:	C. Scott Speal	Date:	January 8, 2020
Project:	State No.: 102-360 F.A.P. No.: 1102(120) Project Title: Traffic Signal System Upgrade – Phase 4 Town: Norwalk		
Finding of Effect:	No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties		

#### *Project Description:*

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), with funding support from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes to assist the City of Norwalk with upgrades to its traffic signal system in the greater downtown area. This project involves the design and implementation of an intelligent transportation system on City and State owned roadways to accommodating diverting traffic from Interstate 95 (I-95) onto local roadways. In conjunction with the diversionary route, the project will also include upgrading five traffic control signals, and disseminating traveler information to the public via dynamic message signs, optimizing traffic signal operations within the City limits and development of a Diversion Routes Operation Plan as part of an overall Concept of Operations. The project goal is to improve operating conditions and maximize capacity during incidents on I-95 between Interchanges 14 through 16 within the City of Norwalk and improve traffic signal operations within the City limit. This project will be administered by the City of Norwalk and is 100% funded with Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Federal funds.

These improvements will include replacement of traffic signal equipment, signal timing and sequencing modifications, image vehicle detection, and interconnection with necessary appurtenances to accommodate the operation, and integration for monitoring of five (5) intersections from the City of Norwalk Traffic Management Center.

1. East Avenue @ Eversley and Riverview East
2. East Avenue @ St. Johns Street and Raymond Terrace
3. West Avenue @ Garner Street and Pine Street Ext
4. West Avenue @ 20 West Avenue Pedestrian Crossing
5. Route 53 (Newtown Avenue) at Allen Road

The project includes installation of twelve (12) blank out/dynamic message signs (DMS) at the following locations:

I-95 Northbound Exit 15 Ramp at Reed Street/Fairfield Avenue  
 Reed Street @ West Avenue/North Water Street  
 West Avenue @ I-95 Northbound / Route 7 Southbound Ramp  
 West Avenue @ Connecticut Ave / Matthews Park Dr.  
 Belden Avenue at Route 1 (Cross St) / Byington Place (North and Southbound)  
 Route 1 (Belden Avenue) @ Route 7 Northbound Ramps  
 Route 1 (North Avenue) @ East Avenue (North and Southbound)  
 East Avenue @ East Wall Street / Morgan Avenue / Hubbels Lane / Park Street  
 Route 1 (Belden Avenue) @ Spring Hill Avenue / Riverside Ave  
 Route 1 (Van Buren Ave) @ Route 7 Southbound / Grandview Avenue  
 East Avenue @ I-95 Exit 16 Southbound Ramps  
 Route 1 (Van Buren Ave) @ Connecticut Avenue

A weather sensor and signal controller will be installed at one location:

Maple Street at Van Buren Avenue

Interconnective fiber-optic and trunk line transmission cable will also be routed along Connecticut Avenue between Stuart Avenue and I-95 Interchange 14 Ramp System through either over head or below ground conduit.

Under the provisions of the Programmatic Agreement executed between CTDOT, FHWA, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer (CT SHPO), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regarding compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) for minor transportation projects<sup>1</sup>, the Office of Environmental Planning (OEP) intends to make a determination of effect on historic properties for the described undertaking.

### ***Resources Potentially Affected:***

Qualified OEP cultural resource staff carried out a background assessment of the various locations of project impact to evaluate potential for effects to historic properties. Online digital resources maintained by the National Park Service were

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<sup>1</sup> *Programmatic Agreement among the Federal Highway Administration, the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding Implementation of Minor Transportation Projects*, signed October 26, 2012 and revised May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Accessible online at: [www.ct.gov/culturalresources](http://www.ct.gov/culturalresources)

consulted for the purpose of locating any historic properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in the vicinity of target intersections. Digital site records maintained by the Office of the State Archaeologist were consulted for the purpose of identifying any previously known archaeological sites within the APE at any of the target intersections. Soil classification maps developed by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service were examined in conjunction with predictive models in common use within the State of Connecticut to assess the sensitivity of the project locations for previously unknown archaeological resources. Recent roadside and aerial photographs were consulted in order to evaluate present conditions at each target intersection.

The proposed DMS location on East Avenue at East Wall Street was found to fall directly within the *Norwalk Green Historic District*, which is both an NRHP-listed and a local District entity with administrative oversight by the Norwalk Historical Commission. This resource is significant for its well preserved 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century residential and institutional architecture. Most structures around this intersection are considered contributing to the District—the primary exceptions are the office / commercial buildings at 83 and 91 East Avenue. Present design plans call for the DMS to be installed at the intersection with Morgan Avenue. Though proposed immediately adjacent to a contributing 2-story Second Empire-style residence at 93 East Avenue, the new sign apparatus should not pose any major visual impediments to the District—being situated on an elevated, mid-roadway mast arm.

The DMS location at East Avenue and Route 1 (North Avenue) also falls at the margins of the Norwalk Green District. Several properties immediately adjacent to the proposed DMS site — including the Hezekiah Jarvis House at 51 East Avenue, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century residences at 53 and 55 East Avenue, and Saint Paul's Church and Cemetery on the west side of the street —are considered contributing to the resource. Preliminary design plans indicate a DMS will be placed upon an existing mast arm across the south side of this intersection at the boundary of the Historic District. As the cathedral at present is obstructed by trees and power lines and an elevated sign should not obscure the ground level cemetery, OEP sees no adverse effect to the District.

The proposed DMS location on West Avenue at the intersection with Connecticut Ave / Matthews Park Drive is situated adjacent to a property containing the *Lockwood Mathews Mansion*—a National Historic Landmark (NHL). Present design calls for the DMS sign apparatus to be installed upon a mast arm overhanging the West Avenue roadway, however, which is well outside the resource property boundary, located over 400 feet from the Mansion itself, and should pose no substantive effect to the NHL.

Documented archaeological resources were found to exist in immediate proximity to two locations, West Avenue at Connecticut Avenue and Route 1 at Maple Street. Minimal information on the nature of these resources was found in the

State site files beyond the notation that they are, or were, pre-European Contact in chronology. *State Site Number 103-21* is plotted to the east of the intersection of West Avenue at Connecticut Avenue. Visual review using recent roadside and aerial photographs reveals that the entire east side of this intersection has been heavily affected by subsurface utilities and ornamental landscapes associated with Mathews Park. OEP therefore sees potential for impacts to intact pre-Colonial archaeological deposits in association with the present traffic control infrastructure as low. *State Site Number 103-20* is plotted to the northwest of the intersection of Maple Street and Route 1 (Van Buren Ave). Though virtually no information was found to indicate the nature of this resource, the entire northwest corner of the intersection has been affected by suburban commercial development, suggesting little chance that a pre-Contact resource could remain intact at this location. In any case, the present undertaking should not involve work beyond the margins of the transportation ROW on the northwest corner and OEP therefore sees minimal potential for archaeological impacts at this location.

***Determination of Effect:***

Consultation was carried out with Federally-recognized Native American Tribal authorities with ancestral ties to the State of Connecticut for this undertaking in September of 2018. None of the solicited Tribes responded to the invitation to consult within the allotted time frame.

Consultation was also carried out with the Norwalk Historic Commission with regard to the project in November of 2019. At the end of the consultation period, the Commission had conveyed no express concerns about the effects of the undertaking.

Given the involvement of an NRHP-listed historic district, albeit without any anticipated project-related impacts that might compromise the integrity of the qualities that render the resource significant, OEP hereby determines that there will be *no adverse effect to historic properties* in association with the present undertaking. With this determination, FHWA, through OEP, has concluded its responsibility to consider the potential effects of the described project on cultural resources under Section 106 of the NHPA via the provisions of the Programmatic Agreement referenced above.



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